

State of California  
Business, Transportation & Housing Agency  
Department of Transportation

Prepared by:  
Gary R. Winters  
Chief  
Division of Environmental Analysis

## ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

10-Mer-59, KP 24.1/30.6 (PM 14.9/19.0)  
Action Item

CTC Meeting: October 3, 2002

Reference No.: 2.2a.(2)

*Original Signed By:*  
ROBERT L. GARCIA  
Chief Financial Officer  
October 1, 2002

### **SUMMARY - NOTICE OF PREPARATION** **STATE ROUTE 59 IN MERCED COUNTY – WIDEN TO FOUR-LANE EXPRESSWAY AND** **REPLACE AND WIDEN BRIDGES IN MERCED**

#### **10-Mer-59, KP 24.1/30.6 (PM 14.9/19.0)**

From 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Bellevue Avenue in the City of Merced.

#### **Proposed Action:**

Reconstruct a two-lane conventional highway to a four-lane expressway with a continuous left-turn lane. Replace Black Rascal and South Fork Black Rascal Creek bridges with one bridge. Improve intersections.

#### **Programming:**

The project is programmed in the 2002 STIP with RIP funds of \$3,423,000 support and \$2,701,000 for Right of Way capital. The total project cost is \$54.7 million with the additional funding to come from the 2004 STIP. Construction is scheduled for FY 2006/07.

#### **Alternatives Being Considered:**

- No-build
- Alternative 1: Construct four-lane expressway with a continuous left-turn lane from 16th Street to just beyond Black Rascal Creek.
- Same as Alternative 1, except end at Belcher Avenue.
- Same as Alternative 1, except end at Bellevue Avenue.

**Potential Significant Environmental Effects:**

- Potential impacts to fairy shrimp, up to 0.30 acre of wetlands, kit fox
- Potential impacts to historic properties.

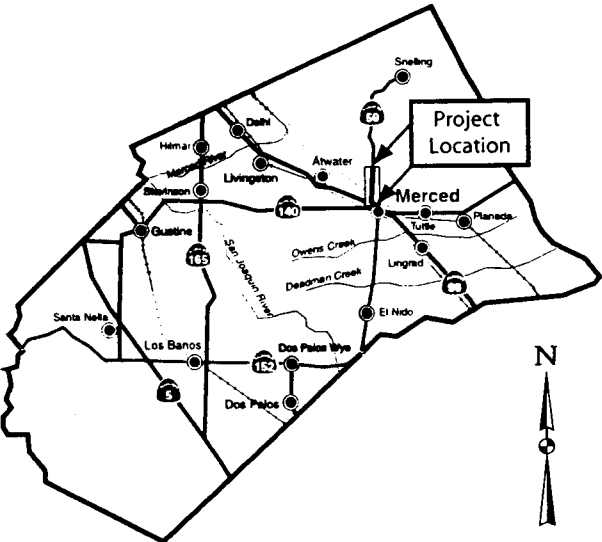
**Proposed Measures to Minimize Harm:**

- Compensate for habitat loss. Avoid or minimize wetland impacts where practicable, mitigate for permanent wetland impacts.
- Relocate and compensate property owners in accordance with Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970.
- Identify and evaluate historic significance of all structures. Avoid National Register Eligible properties.

# MER - 59 Project Location Map

Widening SR59 in Merced County from 2 lane to 4 lane Conversion

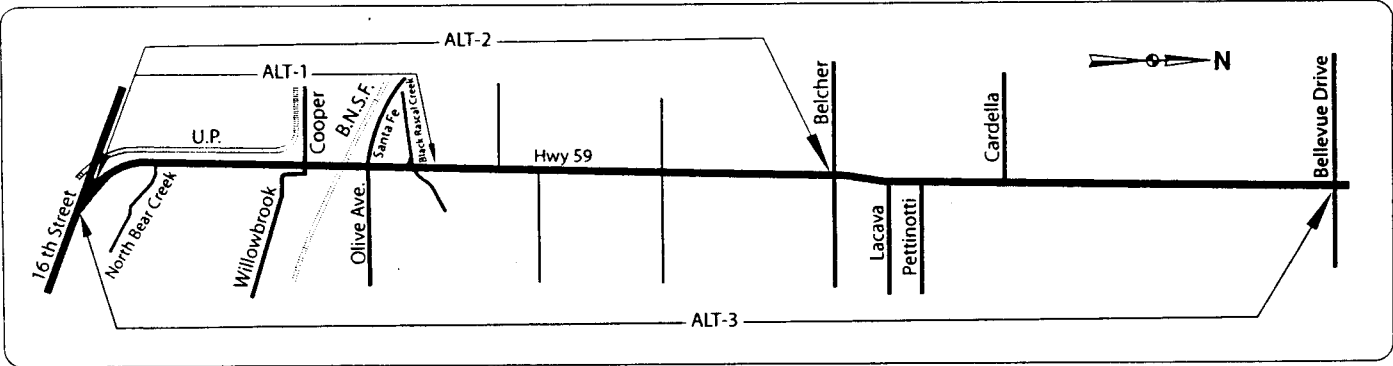
### County Location



### State Location



### Project Location Map



## NOTICE OF PREPARATION

TO: State Clearinghouse  
P.O. Box 3044  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

FROM: Caltrans  
2015 E. Shields Suite 100  
Fresno, CA 93726

SUBJECT: Notice of Preparation of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/ Finding of No Significant Impact  
[References: Division 13, Public Resources Code, Section 21080.4 (State); 40 C.F.R. 1501.7 and 1508.22 (Federal)]

This is to inform you that the California Department of Transportation in cooperation with the FHWA will be the Lead Agency and will prepare an EIR/FONSI for the project described below. Your participation as a responsible/ cooperating agency is requested in the preparation and review of this document. We need to know the applicable permit and environmental review requirements and the scope and content of the environmental information which is germane to your agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Your agency will need to use the EIR/FONSI prepared by our agency when considering your permit or other approval for the project.

The proposed project is located on State Route 59 from 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Bellevue Avenue (between post miles 15.0 and 19.0) in the County of Merced. The project consists of three major build alternatives (concepts), and a no-action alternative:

### Alternative 1:

- Construct a four-lane conventional highway with a continuous left turn lane. The project would begin at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and end just beyond Black Rascal Creek.
- Intersection improvements will be made at the intersections at 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Cooper Avenue and Olive/Santa Fe Avenue.
- Replace the existing Black Rascal and South Fork Black Rascal Creek bridges with one bridge and widen the Branch Black Rascal Canal Creek bridge.

### Alternative 2:

- Construct a four-lane conventional highway with a continuous left turn lane. The project would begin at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and end at Belcher Avenue.
- Intersection improvements will be made at the intersections at 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Cooper Avenue and Olive/Santa Fe Avenue.
- Replace the Black Rascal and South Fork Black Rascal Creek bridges with one bridge and widen the Black Rascal Canal Creek bridge.

**Alternative 3:**

- Construct a four-lane expressway with a continuous left turn lane. The project would begin at 16<sup>th</sup> Street and end at Bellevue Avenue.
- Intersection improvements will be made at the intersections at 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Cooper Avenue and Olive/Santa Fe Avenue.
- Replace the Black Rascal and South Fork Black Rascal Creek bridges with one bridge and widen the Black Rascal Canal Creek bridge.

**Alternative 4: No Build Alternative**

This no-build alternative would consist of no improvements to Route 59. Traffic congestion would continue to be a problem between 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Santa Fe/Olive Avenue and soon reach unacceptable levels. This accident rate would be also continue to be above average.

Probable environmental concerns include:

- Impacts to cultural and visual resources
- Relocation of residents
- Increased noise levels
- Biological impacts
- Construction impacts to residents
- Impacts to farmlands
- Hazardous waste
- Impact to water quality

A team was formed to address scoping issues. This team included members from Caltrans. The team will meet as necessary to address issues throughout the project development process.

Due to the time limits mandated by state law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but not later than 30 days after receipt of this notice. Please send your response and direct any comments regarding this project to Vickie Traxler at the address shown above (or call 559.243.8244). We will need the name for a contact person in your agency.

Date: July 2, 2002

Signature:  
Title:

Vickie Traxler  
Chief, San Joaquin Valley  
Analysis Branch  
Central Region Environmental Division